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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 5

# STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution from the American Association of Retired Persons, Helpage International, and theInternational Federation on Ageing

1. The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached statement submitted by three non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

2. The document points out that whilst the vast majority of elderly persons throughout the world continue to lead active lives, advanced age can also mitigate the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly when combined with factors such as gender, disability or race.

2. The paper applauds existing international instruments which recognize the special problems that the elderly may face; however, it points out that, with the exception of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (General Assembly resolution 46/91), there is no universal international human rights instrument which provides for regular monitoring and review of the situation of older persons. It proposes that such a review could be achieved through the consideration of information concerning the elderly in implementating human rights instruments or through a new international instrument designed to deal exclusively with this situation.

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STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS*
HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL*
THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING*
for Agenda Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda of the World Conference on Human Rights

We, the undersigned NGOs in Consultative Status, note with appreciation General Assembly Resolution 47/122, which puts forth the provisional agenda for the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights. In particular, we welcome Agenda Item 11 which calls for a "Consideration of contemporary trends in and new challenges to the full realization of all human right of men and women, including those of persons belonging to vulnerable groups."

In this respect, we wish to draw the attention of the Fourth Preparatory Committee of the population whose specific needs with regard to human rights have not yet been fully examined by the international community. Among these groups are the elderly. While it must be clearly stated that the vast majority of elderly persons throughout the world continue to lead active lives and make valuable contributions to their families and communities, age can also consitute a jeopardy for the full enjoyment of the human rights, particularly if combined with one or more of the other factors contributing to disadvantage and discrimination, such as sex, minority status, or disability.

There are a number of international instruments which recognize that the elderly may encounter special problems. In this regard, we refer to ILO Recommendation No. 162 concerning Older Workers, adopted by the International Labor Conference in June 1980, which applies to "all workers who are liable to encounter difficulties in employment and occupation because of advancement in age." We also refer to the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter which in Article 4 lays down the right of elderly persons to social protection, including the right to play an active part in public, social and cultural life and a guarantee of the rights of older persons institutions. The European Community in its Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers also addressed the rights of the elderly to a decent standard of living.

These international instruments all recognized the urgent need to address the human rights of older persons. While they must be applauded, they are also, unfortunately, limited in scope. With the exception of the UN Principles for Older Persons (GA resolution 46/91, which represent a statement of vision, there is no universal international human rights instrument which allows a regular monitoring and a review of the situation of older persons. Such a review can be achieved in two ways: 1)

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regularly include information on the elderly in all reports on the implementation of human rights Convenants and other relevant international human rights instruments to be considered by the monitoring bodies; or 2) design an international instrument which deals exclusively with the elimination of disadvantage and discrimination due to advancement in age.

If the World Conference on Human Rights is to truly fulfill its mandate to consider new challenges to the full realization of all human rights of men and women, it must consider the challenge of age and the way forward-looking human rights recommendations addressing the issue of age can maximize the vast potential of elderly persons around the world.